

Why is This Happening Again? The Famine in Sudan: Lessons Learned

September 1998

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An article in the July 27th edition of Time magazine asked the questions that many in the U.S. government and humanitarian assistance community are asking themselves now — Why are we witnessing a famine in Sudan again? How did the international community fail to see the warning signs and prevent the famine? While providing relief for those in need in Sudan is currently the most pressing concern, the U.S. government and the international community cannot afford to ignore these questions. All the actors need to assess whether or not they did all that they could to avert the current disaster. It is hoped that the lessons learned from this analysis will shed light on the strengths, weaknesses, and inherent limitations of the involved parties and help prevent further deterioration of the present situation and future recurrence of a human tragedy on this scale.

Overview

In response to the current famine in southern Sudan, where 2.6 million people are at risk of serious food shortages and famine, the international community launched the largest food airdrop in history.¹ In July, the World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that 15,000 mt of food aid per month would be required in war affected zones throughout Sudan for the following three months —10,000 for the south and 5,000 for the north. Food experts have estimated that food shortages will continue through late 1999, with phase two of the famine likely to peak again after April 1999. It is estimated that thousands have already died; between July 11th and August 12th, 1,324 deaths were recorded in Wau alone. Of the 1.9 million people residing in the Bahr el Ghazal/Lakes region, the UN estimates that 701,000 are facing critical food shortages. This number includes 100,000 internally displaced people, the majority of whom have fled their homes in the past few months to escape violence in their areas.²

The United States government (USG) had made a substantial financial contribution to the current relief operation in Sudan. As of September 30, 1998 USAID had contributed \$110 million in FY1998 to the relief effort in Sudan. Since the creation in 1989 of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), the United Nations (UN) humanitarian effort in Sudan operated by WFP and UNICEF, the United States has contributed a total of \$700 million to Sudan.³ This figure does not include the food aid provided by the USG that is channeled to NGOs working outside of the OLS.⁴ In addition to relief assistance, USAID is providing \$4 million in development assistance this fiscal year as part of the Sudan Transitional Assistance for Rehabilitation (STAR) program which aims to enhance the development of democratic systems in the opposition held territory of Sudan. On the political front, the United States supports the ongoing peace process pursued by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and follows a policy that

¹ "United Nations and partner humanitarian agencies say Sudan faces worst food crisis in 10 years," UN Department of Public Information (DPI), August 3, 1998.

² *Report of a WHO/UNICEF Joint Assessment Mission to Bahr-El-Ghazal, Sudan*, August 26, 1998.
[<http://www.reliefweb.int>]

³ Testimony of Susan Rice, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, to the House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights and Subcommittee on Africa's Joint Hearing on "Crises in Sudan and Northern Uganda," July 29, 1998 [hereinafter Rice testimony].

⁴ In FY98, 23% of USAID emergency food aid was channeled through non-OLS NGOs.

aims to isolate the Government of Sudan (GOS) and change its behavior.

Historical Background (1989 to Present)

The current famine in Bahr el Ghazal resembles a famine that took place in the same region 10 years ago.

During the 1988 famine in Bahr el Ghazal, which was caused by both drought and civil strife, an estimated 250,000 southern Sudanese perished and over a million people were displaced. The extent of the deaths in 1988 led to the creation of OLS in April 1989 as the first UN humanitarian program that sought to assist internally displaced and war-affected civilians during an ongoing internal conflict. The agreement that created the OLS, agreed to by both the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the GOS, included provision for "corridors of tranquility" through which relief would safely pass. The government in place at the time of the agreement, led by Sadiq al Mahdi, was overthrown on June 30, 1989 by Brig. Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir and replaced by an Islamic fundamentalist regime that is still in power.

Despite the agreement made in 1989, fighting between SPLA factions and the GOS' imposition of flight bans in the following months and years served to hinder access to areas requiring relief. Lack of access was compounded by lack of funds and the GOS' refusal to heed warnings about looming starvation. As a result, the OLS efforts to reach an estimated 1.2 million people in need of food aid in 1992 were hampered. Finally, in May 1993 the OLS acquired secure access to the "famine triangle" around Ayod, Kongor, and Waat where approximately 60,000 people were facing starvation as a direct result of civil strife. By mid-1993, it was estimated that 1.5 million were in need of food aid. The agreement between the SPLA-Torit and SPLA-United factions to provide access to all people in need collapsed and, by mid-1994, the UN estimated that 1.3 million were in need of food aid. This, the second famine in six years, was brought to an end by early 1995 when security in the region improved.

Several patterns emerge from the history of humanitarian assistance to Sudan over the past decade, including the current relief effort. One pattern is that, in each instance of famine and severe humanitarian crises in southern Sudan, civil strife has been the primary contributing factor. Second, in each case restrictions on access to those in need of food aid have fueled the deterioration of already grim food security situations. Finally, in each case the warring parties did not comply with their 1989 agreement to provide safe corridors for the delivery of food aid.⁵

Early Warning of the Current Famine

Evidence of the humanitarian crisis in Sudan began to appear in the American and world media as early as March 1998. James McKinley of the *New York Times* wrote an article in the March 18, 1998 edition of the newspaper with the headline, "Famine Looming, Sudan Curbs Relief to Rebel-Held Areas" and CNN provided coverage in March of the conflict and resulting displacement in southern Sudan.

However, it was not until late June and early July that the majority of news outlets began to cover the Sudanese famine. As graphic images of starving women, men, and children began to filter to the American public and pressure mounted on the USG to respond to the famine, Clinton Administration officials questioned how it was that early warning systems had failed to predict a humanitarian disaster of this scale.

A chronological review of the public statements and press releases by some of the major humanitarian agencies monitoring developments in the region—WFP, UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture

⁵ Brian D'Silva of REDSO/ESA provided useful historical information for this section.

Organization (FAO), World Vision, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and USAID's Famine and Early Warning System (FEWS) —is provided in the annex. The chronology reveals a disparity among the reports from various sources in describing the severity of the situation in Sudan since September 1997.

The earliest reports came from a December 1997 joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment to Sudan that found crop production to be down 45 percent and predicted the food aid requirements for 1998 to total 73,500 tons—including 30,000 tons of imported food. In the days following the GOS' suspension of relief flights to Bahr el Ghazal on February 4th, World Vision was the only organization to publicly warn of a “great human tragedy” looming in southern Sudan. While FEWS and the WFP released regular updates in February and March detailing the deteriorating situation, neither organization publicly predicted a crisis of extreme magnitude. A March 25th Reuters article quoted a spokeswoman for OLS as saying that it was “premature” to talk of famine. In the same article, Dan Eiffe of NPA described the situation as “desperate” and “the worst scene ever in Bahr el Ghazal.” The NPA also issued two appeals in April warning of “impending starvation in Bahr el Ghazal” and equating the situation to the 1984 famine in Ethiopia.

The South Sudan coordinator for the WFP was quoted in the March 18th *New York Times* article as saying, “in a month's time, or two months at the latest, the situation is going to deteriorate drastically.” He and other UN officials were cited in this article as predicting that there would be widespread famine in Bahr el Ghazal within a year unless the flight ban was lifted. However, it was not until April 21st that the WFP issued their first public appeal stating that the region “faced catastrophe” unless food aid was doubled or tripled.

The review of news releases indicates that it was the non-OLS humanitarian agencies operating in southern Sudan that provided the most accurate information and the earliest public warnings. As the disparity between the analysis of WFP workers on the ground and WFP public statements reveals, OLS agencies failed to make the information they had public in time for the famine to be averted. Among the possible explanations for the OLS failure to sound the warning bell is its cumbersome and slow bureaucracy, its desire at the time to not upset delicate diplomatic negotiations with the Sudanese government over the flight ban, and/or its overly cautious use of the term “famine.” However, it is also clear from the review of statements that, once the OLS renewed its operations following the lifting of the flight ban on April 2nd, its member agencies took the lead in issuing appeals and monitoring the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sudan.

Contributing Factors in the Failure to Prevent the Famine

In order to more fully appreciate and understand the issues underlying the seeming failure of the international community to predict the current famine in Sudan, it is important to consider the following factors.

Lack of Access

The flight ban imposed by the GOS from February 4th through April 2, 1998, and the widespread fighting in southern Sudan, created problems not only in terms of providing relief, but also in terms of assessing the situation on the ground. Without access, FAO and WFP teams could not sufficiently pinpoint or assess needs. Even without the flight ban, the annual FAO/WFP food assessments hindered by the lack of roads in the region which force monitors to conduct their assessments on foot. These conditions mean that the most thorough assessments of food production and needs in southern Sudan are largely subjective.

OLS Failure

The failure of the OLS to issue a loud enough warning in time to prevent the famine and its failure to resist the political manipulations of the Sudanese government have raised serious concerns within the USG. Because of its reliance on the GOS to grant access to areas in need in southern Sudan, the OLS has not been as effective as the international community had hoped. However, despite the issue of access, the OLS had sufficient information about the precarious situation of food security in southern Sudan to warrant its being more vigorous in its public and private appeals to the GOS to lift the flight ban.

The OLS was also prevented from adequately addressing the looming famine in Sudan because of internal and personality problems affecting the relationship between the southern Sudan and northern Sudan offices of the OLS. International donors in direct contact with both of these offices describe a situation in the months preceding the famine, where warnings and policy recommendations from the southern OLS office were largely ignored by the northern office.

The Kerubino Factor and Conflict in Bahr El Ghazal

There is no dispute that, had it not been for the ongoing conflict in Bahr el Ghazal, there would not currently be a famine in the region. While the Arab tribal militia (*muraheleen*), SPLA, and GOS Popular Defense Forces (PDF) have all been active participants in the ongoing conflict, it is the maneuvers involving Commander Kerubino Kuanyin Bol and his forces that had the most profound effect in the evolution of the current humanitarian crisis. In late 1997, Kerubino, who had been allied with the GOS [since 1995], decided to redefect to the SPLA and attempt to capture Wau and two other towns. In a Trojan Horse maneuver in late December 1997, several thousand SPLA troops pretended to surrender to Kerubino in Wau. On January 29, 1998, Kerubino and these troops attempted, unsuccessfully, to capture Wau, Gogrial, and Aweil from GOS forces.

The combined effect of tens of thousands fleeing the three towns and the GOS' suspension of relief flights upon realizing that Kerubino was switching sides precipitated the disaster we are witnessing today. At the time, the WFP assessments did not take into account the effect of the "Kerubino factor" and its effect on the food security situation in the region. It was not until April 21st that the WFP released higher estimates of food aid needed and number of people affected.

USG Lack of Capacity

Senior USG officials report receiving varying analyses of the food security situation in southern Sudan in the months preceding the outbreak of famine in July 1998. However, warnings of a serious disaster were being sent to Washington from USAID staff in the field as early as April. To prevent this lack of information coordination from recurring, an assessment needs to be conducted, and steps taken, to improve information flow and coordination among USG agencies involved in monitoring food security in the region. Mechanisms to ensure that senior USG policy-makers receive reliable and timely information must be created.

While members of Congress and some Clinton Administration officials have cast blame on FEWS for not predicting the famine, it is important to assess whether or not FEWS has the capacity to collect sufficient data, and provide early warnings of humanitarian crises, from conflict zones such as Southern Sudan. Staffing needs should also be assessed as FEWS relies, for the most part, on its one person office in southern Sudan for information gathering and a variety of other tasks.

Lessons Learned

Adequate assessments and early warning systems may have prevented the deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in the Sudan into the famine that we are witnessing today. In order for the USG and the international community to be able to adequately meet the future humanitarian needs of the Sudanese people—and people plagued by civil conflict and food insecurity in other parts of the world—they must ensure that lessons learned from the recent experience in Sudan advise future efforts.

Infrastructure is High Priority

Much of the OLS failure to adequately assess and respond to the humanitarian needs in Sudan is directly related to its reliance on airlifts to supply relief food. If there were adequate roads and bridges connecting the affected regions in southern Sudan with neighboring countries, relief operations would not be vulnerable to flight bans. The lesson is to invest heavily in infrastructure where there is limited access to vulnerable, yet relatively secure, areas. In the long-term, the savings and benefits of this investment will more than compensate its costs.

Restructuring and Renegotiation of OLS

Given the OLS failure to prevent famine from recurring in Sudan over its nine years in existence, it is hard to dispute that the OLS needs to be reformed. However, in doing so, the basic principle of the OLS—to have safe corridors for humanitarian access—should not be compromised. The areas that need to be addressed are the friction between the OLS offices in the north and south, the inflexibility created by the OLS bureaucracy, the high costs of OLS relief efforts, and the need for strong leadership in the OLS.

Increase Local Food Production

Sudan has the resources to feed not only its own population but also those of many of the surrounding countries. There are farmers in Western Equatoria province in southern Sudan who are ready and able to increase production as soon as they have the capital they need. There are also NGOs and local authorities in the area with experience in generating local surpluses. With Congressional approval, USAID could provide immediate targeted development assistance to increase internal food production and improve access to markets so that by early 1999 there will be enough local production to meet local needs.

Link Development and Humanitarian Assistance

In order to prevent future humanitarian crises in southern Sudan and elsewhere, donors must seek ways to link and integrate development assistance with humanitarian assistance. Linkages to be pursued should include efforts aimed at increasing local food production and assistance to the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA) to increase its administrative capacity, its ability for rapid response, and information collection and analysis.

Consider Humanitarian Structure for Opposition-held Area

The USG has already recognized the need for development assistance in opposition-held areas. It may also be wise to consider the creation of an independent humanitarian assistance program for secure opposition-held territory. Such a program would not be held hostage to the political manipulations and negotiations between the parties to the conflict in Sudan.

Hold the GOS Accountable

The GOS and the SPLA signed an international agreement in 1989 in which they agreed to secure “corridors of tranquility” for the delivery of food aid. For too long, the GOS has been able to get away with not complying with this international agreement. To avoid continued defiance of the agreement, the international community needs to use the highest level international forum possible to address this issue.

If the UN Security Council were to immediately take action on this issue, it could prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation by ensuring access to areas in need of relief including some, such as the Nuba Mountains, where a flight ban is still in effect.

Improve USG Monitoring Capacity and Coordination

In order for the USG to have the capacity to effectively monitor food security throughout the world, there need to be more human and material resources devoted to, and improved coordination between, the various monitoring agencies. There needs to be a simple and efficient system for early warnings of famine to be communicated to the relevant staff at the National Security Council (NSC). The mechanism needs to have safeguards in place to ensure that such warnings do not go unnoticed.

Acknowledge Limitations

As long as there are limitations on the USG and the international community’s ability to effectively predict humanitarian crises around the world, that limitation needs to be acknowledged. For example, in the case of the flight ban preventing accurate assessments in Sudan, the various monitoring agencies should have been very public about their inability to accurately assess the food security situation on the ground. Such acknowledgement would have sent the message, “we don’t know for sure whether there is a crisis situation on the horizon, but there is a chance of this and we should all be prepared for the worst case scenario.”

Increase Support for Non-OLS Humanitarian Agencies

Although the USG has provided substantial assistance to non-OLS humanitarian agencies operating in Sudan, recent events demonstrate that these agencies require, and deserve, additional assistance. Non-OLS agencies do not have the extensive capacity and reach of the OLS, but they are unencumbered by an unwieldy bureaucracy and continue to operate regardless of the policies of the GOS. Many of the groups have had operations in parts of Sudan for a number of years and they are often the best equipped to report on the situation on the ground. For all of these reasons, the USG could increase the proportion of assistance channeled to non-OLS groups.

Annex 1: Historical Background of Famine in Sudan: Chronology of Events, 1989 to Present

1988/1989	Bahr el Ghazal famine
April 1, 1989	Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) commences operations
June 1989	Sudanese Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi overthrown by military Islamic regime in a coup
April 2, 1990	OLS II commences The SPLA joins the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which represents most opposition forces Ethnic conflict within the SPLA results in factions emerging Government troops capture many southern towns including Torit, where SPLA has headquarters
1992/1993	Peace negotiations in Nigeria fail
1993/1994	Humanitarian crisis in the “famine triangle” which consists of the three southern Sudanese towns of Ayod, Kongor, and Waat
Jan. 1993	First U.S. Ambassador to visit SPLA controlled area
May 1993	OLS acquires access to the “famine triangle” in southern Sudan; 1.5 million in need of food aid IGAD negotiations fail 1.3 million in need of food by mid-year The northern opposition unites with southern opposition
April 1996	Khartoum and six southern minority factions reach agreement on referendum for self-rule for the south, for a provisional period of four years; Garang of SPLA refuses to sign agreement
Nov. 1996	Peace talks in Nairobi fail
April 1997	NSC/White House Deputies meeting decided that development assistance will be provided to opposition area for broad DG activities
Sept./Oct. 1997	FAO/WFP conducts food assessment in southern Sudan
Dec. 1997	Trojan horse maneuver of SPLA defecting to join Kerubino
Jan. 29, 1998	Kerubino forces and SPLA attempt to capture Wau, Gogrial, and Aweil; thousands displaced
Feb. 4, 1998	GOS imposes ban on relief flights to Bahr el Ghazal
Feb. 1998	WFP estimates that 250,000 require food aid in Sudan
April 2, 1998	Flight ban lifted
April 21, 1998	WFP increases estimate to 350,000 in need
June 26, 1998	GOS authorizes OLS use of 12 aircraft
July 15, 1998	SPLM/A and GOS both declare a cease-fire in Bahr el Ghazal for three months
July 16, 1998	OLS announces plan to deliver 15,000 tons of food per month for the next four months to 2.4 million people
July 27, 1998	WFP increases target to 2.6 million people
July 19, 1997	U.S. Congress holds hearing on crisis in Sudan
Aug. 3, 1998	OLS states that current humanitarian aid crisis is the worst in Sudan in past 10 years
Aug. 4-7, 1998	IGAD sponsored GOS and SPLM negotiations held in Addis Ababa; no agreement was reached on major questions of contention.
Aug. 20, 1998	The U.S. launches a missile attack on the El Shifa factory in Khartoum, Sudan.
Sept. 13, 1998	GOS bombs Yei; bombs hit the hospital and one is killed and 21 are wounded. This is the fifth time that the GOS has bombed the hospital in 1998.

Annex 2: Timeline of Press Releases and Appeals from Humanitarian Agencies Since September 1997

September 1997

- Sept. 1997 WFP annual needs assessment gets underway
- Sept. 26, 1997 FEWS Bulletin states that “NGOs operating in Mundri County (Western Equatoria) and Twic County (Bahr el Ghazal) have reported that returnees and internally displaced populations have limited access to food.”

October 1997

- Oct. 27, 1997 FEWS Bulletin states that “the most troublesome situations exist in areas affected by both drought and civil insecurity, particularly in Northern Bahr el Ghazal.”

November 1997

- Nov. 1997 FAO Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS) report states that 1997-1998 food aid requirements for Sudan are expected to total 78,000 tons.
- FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment team visits Sudan in mid-November to appraise the 1997 coarse grain crops and to estimate import requirements for 1998, including food aid.
- Nov. 28, 1997 FEWS Bulletin states that OLS annual needs assessment concluded that 27,000 mt in relief food aid would be required in 1998 but separate crop assessment by local authorities estimates a deficit of nearly 30,000 mt. In addition, it reports that the OLS has issued an emergency appeal for \$2.7 million as an interim measure until donors commit funds to the 1998 appeal.

December 1997

- Dec. 22, 1997 Report of the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission concludes that, “severe food deficits are anticipated in the South where production declined by 45 percent due to dry weather and civil strife, and in parts of the Western regions of North Darfur and North Kordofan.” Citing high levels of child malnutrition, the erratic rainfall, and continued conflict, the assessment states (but does not highlight) that “there is a clear sign of an emergency situation in the South and in some provinces of Northern Darfur for several hundred thousand people during 1998.” The assessment concluded that food aid requirements for 1998, covering the South and affected parts in Northern States, will total 73,500 tons, of which 30,000 will need to be imported.
- Dec. 29, 1997 FEWS Bulletin states that “OLS is expected to request 30,000 mt of food for 1998. Its annual needs assessment anticipated needs of 35,000 mt of food, but limited delivery capacity and a scarcity of funds from donors has led to the reduced request to the international community.”

January 1998

Jan. 28, 1998 FEWS Bulletin states that “conditions in Lakes and northern Bahr el Ghazal Regions are below average.”

February 1998

Feb. 4, 1998 The GOS suspends relief flights of OLS relief agencies to Bahr el Ghazal

Feb. 10, 1998 World Vision press release states that “a great human tragedy is looming in the southern Sudanese province of Bahr el Ghazal, due to the ban of relief flights by the government of Sudan.” World Vision aid workers report that, “tens of thousands of war displaced persons are fleeing through hostile bush in urgent need of food, medicine, shelter, and security.”

Feb. 26, 1998 FEWS Bulletin states that, “various crop assessments by WFP, NGOs, and local authorities corroborate a serious reduction in cereal production across southern Sudan and as a result “harvest losses in Eastern Equatoria and Lakes Regions and in northern Bahr el Ghazal Region will require relief distributions beyond previously planned amounts until the next major harvest, between June and August.” The bulletin also warns that “as many as 250,000 persons in counties anticipating civil insecurity could escape to areas that have had a poor season, increasing their need for relief food.”

Feb. 28, 1998 WFP issues news release on the arrival of the first trucks to Bahr el Ghazal. The release includes a quote from David Fletcher, Head of WFP’s Southern Sudan operation, stating that the situation is still serious because only one-quarter of the population in northern Bahr el Ghazal can be reached by road. The news release also reports that 100,000 people in Bahr el Ghazal are in urgent need of food and other assistance.

March 1998

March 8, 1998 CNN reports on GOS bombing of Yei.

March 11, 1998 NPA issues press release on the bombing of Yei Hospital by GOS airplanes; 11 people killed including one NPA employee.

March 23, 1998 World Vision press release launches a call to demand that open access to southern Sudan, and an increase in the number of aircraft to deliver food, be granted. The organization also says that 70 percent of the children in Tonj county are malnourished.

March 24, 1998 World Vision calls for increased aid to southern Sudan and a lifting of the flight ban. The organization states that a survey has revealed that an average of 50 percent to 60 percent of the children under age five are suffering from some degree of malnutrition.

March 25,1998 A Reuters article on the hunger crisis in southern Sudan describes a disagreement among aid workers on the gravity of the situation in Bahr el Ghazal. Quotes Gillian Wilcox, spokeswoman for Operation Lifeline Sudan is quoted as saying, "It is a very difficult situation and a lot of people are affected, but to talk about famine and starvation deaths is a little premature." Dan Eiffe, senior aid worker for Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA),is quoted as saying, "the situation is really desperate. It is the worst scene ever in Bahr el Ghazal and it is compounded by government bombing of civilians."

March 26,1998 FEWS Bulletin states that "people in southern Sudan need relief food and seeds to prevent the situation from deteriorating further."

April 1998

April 1998 NPA appeal speaks of "impending starvation in Bahr el Ghazal." The appeal states that it is the most alarming situation the NPA has witnessed in Sudan in the 12 years it has operated there and that, if the next harvest is missed, people will be reliant on relief food for survival until August 1999. Those displaced due to fighting since the beginning of 1998 are estimated to number 270,300.

April 2, 1998 FAO update states that prospects for Sudan's 1998 wheat crop are favorable but that "despite the overall satisfactory food supply, the situation is critical in Southern Sudan affected by civil war ..widespread food shortages and increased children malnutrition are reported."

April 10, 1998 CNN reports that 250,000 people are facing starvation in southern Sudan. The article cites aid agencies as saying that 1.6 million people could be in need of food aid by the summer.

April 21, 1998 WFP press release warns that, "unless it receives permission to double or triple its airlift of food aid to southern Sudan within a matter of days, the Bahr el Ghazal region will face catastrophe." It states that the number of people in "dire need" may have soared beyond 350,000.

April 28, 1998 FEWS Bulletin states that "the food security situation in southern Sudan is extremely precarious."

April 30, 1998 NPA press release states that the situation can be compared to the 1984 famine in Ethiopia.

May 1998

May 1, 1998 WFP issues urgent appeal for funds to airdrop emergency aid and begins a US\$65.8 million operation to deliver food to 2.48 million Sudanese over next 12 months. WFP states that food deficits of 30 percent to 60 percent are expected in Bahr el Ghazal and Eastern Equatorial, South Kordofan, and North Darfur and displaced persons camps around Wau and Khartoum.

- May 5, 1998 USAID's Office for U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) reports in a complex emergency situation report that according to UN estimates "380,000 in Bahr el Ghazal/Lakes Region are facing a humanitarian crisis." It also reports FAO figures of over 1.2 million war-displaced civilians who remain in need of emergency food and non-food assistance in 1997 and 1998 and says that the OLS is targeting 700,000 people facing severe food shortages in southern Sudan. The situation report also details the GOS' bombings of civilian locations.
- May 15, 1998 FAO/GIEWS issues a special alert on Sudan stating that the food supply situation in southern Sudan gives "cause for serious concern." Alert says that "some 60 to 70 percent of the population in Eastern Equatoria, Bahr el Ghazal, Lakes, parts of Jonglei State, and the transitional zones are currently in need of emergency food aid." It says that early indications of prospects for the 1998 main season food crops are not encouraging.
- May 20, 1998 FEWS Bulletin states that "poor harvest and fighting have put hundreds of thousands of people in need of assistance in southern Sudan." The bulletin also explains that "civil insecurity has made comprehensive assessments impossible."

June 1998

- June 26, 1998 The GOS authorizes OLS to use 12 aircraft.

WFP press release states that "famine zones are emerging in about 25 pockets of the Bahr el Ghazal region, and there are reports that children are dying at a rate of about 15 per day. WFP relief officials are concerned that as the population enters what is known as the "hunger gap"—the period between the planting of crops and harvest—the suffering will increase as many have no resources to fall back on. The release also notes that the ongoing slaughter of cattle indicates a crisis.

FEWS Bulletin states that the situation in southern Sudan is "alarming." It notes that "higher-than-anticipated numbers of people have arrived at relief food distribution centers" and that "malnutrition rates among children are alarmingly high." Projects that "relief needs will persist at this level even after the approaching harvest."

July 1998

- July 1, 1998 The U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) and World Vision call for an immediate moratorium on all bombing in southern Sudan. Almquist of World Vision is quoted as saying, "The situation in Sudan today is much worse than anyone imagined."
- July 2, 1998 James P. Rubin, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Chief Spokesman, urges the GOS to honor the pledge not to impede relief operations. Rubin refers to the existence of "serious food shortages" and states that "1.2 million people urgently require food aid."
- July 10, 1998 WFP Executive Director, Catherine Bertini, calls on the international community to help end the conflict. In a WFP press release, attention is drawn to a number of instances where fighting in various parts of the country has prevented WFP from delivering aid

and a prediction that the numbers are going to rise is made.

- July 13, 1998 UNICEF news release states that the humanitarian situation in famine-hit Bahr el Ghazal is continuing to deteriorate, and that 50.9 percent of children in 12 rebel-held locations are malnourished. The major reason for the child malnutrition is identified as lack of food.
- July 14, 1998 WFP reports that thousands of Sudanese are pouring into GOS garrison towns to escape fighting and food shortages.
- July 16, 1998 Two UN senior officials (one OCHA and one WFP) hold a press conference in Khartoum. They praise the cease-fire, but stress that it does not cover all areas of conflict. They announce WFP plans to deliver 15,000 mt of food per month over the next four months to 2.4 million beneficiaries in areas served by the OLS. There is food delivery to 89 locations, 37 of which are in Bahr el Ghazal, using 13 cargo aircraft.
- July 20, 1998 World Vision Sudan Emergency Fact Sheet reports that WFP estimates that 2.6 million people require emergency assistance and states that, "although the flight ban has been lifted it may be too late to get enough food to all of those who need it." It warns that "unless Bahr el Ghazal farmers can plant and reap a successful crop in August and September, they are likely to be entirely dependent on food aid for another 12 months."
- July 27, 1998 WFP appeals for more funds (US \$154.5 million) to expand its emergency food aid, stating that "a great deal of help from the donor community [is needed] if we are to prevent an all-out famine in Sudan." WFP now aims to target 2.6 million people "1.2 million in the rebel-held areas of southern Sudan, 1.2 million in government-held areas of southern Sudan and the transitional zone of Southern Kordofan and Southern Darfur, and 200,000 in northern Sudan. WFP also announces its intent to repair roads and rebuild bridges in the southern sector and acquire a fleet of 40 trucks.
- July 29, 1998 U.S. Congress House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights and Subcommittee on Africa holds a hearing on "Crises in Sudan and Northern Uganda."

August 1998

- Aug. 3, 1998 OLS position paper states that Sudan is facing the worst humanitarian aid crisis in 10 years.
- Aug. 10, 1998 The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) makes a statement that the international aid efforts for starving refugees in Bahr el Ghazal have failed to prevent the situation from getting worse. In Wau, there are 70,000 refugees and 60 percent of them are undernourished.
- Aug. 25, 1998 World Vision issues a news release announcing that it will boost food relief efforts in Sudan next year following predictions of poor harvest and more famine in 1999. World Vision predicts an extended "hunger gap" of seven months beginning in February 1999.
- Aug. 28, 1998 FEWS Bulletin reports that malnutrition deaths are widely perceived to be increasing with the daily mortality rate among children and adults since early August averaging 25

per 10,000. The bulletin also reports that southern Sudan's food supply prospects for the coming year are precarious.

September 1998

- Sept. 9, 1998 Following a three week assessment by a joint task force including OLS agencies, the SRRA, the SPLM, the SRRA and OLS announced a number of measures to be taken to ensure that food reaches the neediest people. The measures include increasing the number of food monitors and distributors and increasing coordination among agencies.
- Sept. 14, 1998 NPA release claims that GOS bombed Yei on the 13th. Bombs hit the Yei hospital run by NPA for the fifth time in 1998. One was killed and 21 wounded. NPA expresses concern that the treaty to ensure that this area should be open for the transport of relief aid.
- Sept. 16, 1998 OLS Emergency update reports that some areas of Bahr el Ghazal show signs of improvement and the OLS annual assessment is underway.

Annex 3: USG Contributions to the Relief Effort in Sudan, FY 1998

USG Assistance⁶

US Department of State, Bureau for Populations, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) Assistance FY 1998 (as of 9/25/98)	\$25,000,000⁷
USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Response, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (BHR/OFDA) Assistance FY 1998 (as of 9/25/98)	\$38,054,704
USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Response, Food for Peace (BHR/FFP) Assistance FY 1998 (as of 9/25/98)	\$64,135,707
Total USG Assistance (as of 9/25/98)	\$127,190,411

⁶ Figures provided by USAID, BHR/OFDA and DOS/PRM.

⁷ This figure is a rough estimate. It includes PRM's contributions to UNHCR, WFP, ICRC, and other NGO programs serving the Sudanese refugee population in Kenya.

Annex 4: Map of southern Sudan

